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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 005853

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SUBJECT: PRT/KHOST: KHOST EAGER TO CONVERT ARBAKI INTO ANAP

REF: KABUL 5632

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Provincial and Ministry of Interior (MOI) officials had selected the first 460 members of a future Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP) force for Khost, but MOI, implementing a November 11 agreement under the direction of the Policy Action Group (PAG), has since told Khost Afghan National Police (ANP) leadership to cease recruiting until further notice. The final number of Khost's future force remains in question, but will range between 460 and 920. Governor Arsala Jamal is frustrated Khost was not included in the first round of ANAP deployments and continues to make the case that Khost has more at stake than other approved provinces. Provincial leaders are optimistic locally recruited ANAP, like the tribal Arbaki, can draw local communities closer to the government. Khost's ANAP forces will be as broadly representative as logistically possible and will be deployed outside of the districts they are recruited from as needed, according to the Khost ANP leadership. End Summary.

Governor Makes Case for Expedited ANAP Deployment

2. (SBU) Khost Governor Arsala Jamal told PRTOff December 3 he was disappointed Khost did not make the priority list for expediting deployment of Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP). Jamal requested PRTOff press the urgency of a Khost ANAP deployment with the Embassy, stressing the province's importance as a regional center and security lynchpin. He said the symbolic value of losing control of Khost, outside of the Taliban's traditional southern strongholds, would hit the country much harder than isolated districts in other prioritized provinces. Jamal said the 460 selected ANAP candidates would "not wait forever" to be called to duty, adding that if MOI waited too long they would have to start the selection process over again, although he did not specify how long that would be. Jamal said some overzealous district ANP commanders were encouraging candidates to show up for work and take uniforms under the assumption they would be paid out of the Governor's emergency fund used to pay Arbaki

until MOI ANAP funding begins. "I had to tell them to stop and keep only the existing Arbaki force and send others home."

MOI Mixed Signals to Khost: Slow Down, Increase Force Size

13. (SBU) An MOI-commission toured selected districts to screen the first 460 Khost ANAP candidates from mid-October to mid-November, according to Deputy ANP Commander Colonel Zaman on November 29. The Khost ANP submitted paperwork on this first round of ANAP, but MOI contacted Khost ANP in late November to "slow down" and not call any candidates to duty prior to securing of funding to ensure salaries. "The last thing we need is problems from the start with wages and people walking off the job," said Zaman. This has also put on hold plans to recruit an additional 190 ANAP Governor Jamal claimed he had convinced MOI in writing to provide (Zaman claimed it was 150 additional). Jamal and Zaman confirmed ANP Commander Gen. Ayub was in Kabul lobbying MOI for a total 800-man ANAP force. Jamal added MOI also agreed to approve an additional 100-plus ANAP for security on the Khost-Gardez Road once construction begins. This would be a special force that would not count against either Khost,s or Paktia,s official roles. Neither Jamal nor Zaman could explain if the increased Khost total would be taken from other provinces or added to the national 11,271 total. Jamal was likewise at odds to reconcile conflicting signals from MOI about the size and speed of the deployment. "We need help, who gets what and when is still a fluid thing," he said December 3, in contrast to a more assured posture he had following an October 28 meeting at MOI, when he told PRTOff Khost was on the fast track to first-round consideration.

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(Comment: In response to mounting international community concern that the expedited ANAP force-generation program was failing to attract recruits representative of the tribal and clan balances of the districts to which they will be deployed as well as in recognition that limited training resources should be concentrated for best effect, MOI, at the direction of the Policy Action Group (PAG), ceased recruitment in other than the six priority provinces,8 Farah, Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzghan and Zabul. MOI will resume recruiting outside the initial six priority provinces when a Combined Security Transition Command) Afghanistan (CSTC-A)-led Joint Planning Group develops program expansion criteria that reaffirm ethnic balance as a guiding principle of ANAP recruitment. End Comment.)

ANP Plans to Transplant Arbaki Legitimacy to ANAP

14. (SBU) Provincial leaders are overwhelmingly supportive of converting existing tribal elder-backed and -selected Arbaki ("village defenders") being used by ANP and paid by the Governor into ANAP. They believe international community fears that the force constitutes rearming militias do not apply to Khost or neighboring provinces with historic tribal/regional Arbaki traditions -- in contrast to provinces where militias have traditionally been strong with loyalty vested in personalities. General Ayub said he hoped to transplant the built-in local credibility of the Arbaki to the ANAP, to which he expected all existing Arbaki to transfer. Zaman discounted concerns of a couple of district commissioners that some Arbaki would object to working directly for the GOA instead of through their village elders. He said Arbaki were among the ample interested candidates, many of whom had to be turned away. Zaman said the fear of stripping Arbaki of the local legitimacy they enjoy by converting them into ANAP was mitigated by a selection process that requires candidate sponsorship from both a GOA official and two village elders. He was confident the selection board, which also includes an NDS representative, a Kabul MOI general, and various MOI personnel officials, would

produce a quality force.

Deployment vs. Recruitment; Arbaki Shopping Rumors

15. (SBU) Zaman said the 460 selected candidates represented a broad swath of tribes, noting even some Kuchis had applied in Tere Zayi District, although they were still underrepresented. He said MOI was responsible for picking the districts from which people are recruited, including 160 from a single district (Sabari) and none from others, such as troubled Spera District. General Ayub explained November 4 that ANAP would not necessarily be stationed from where they were recruited, although this would be optimal, and he would assign ANAP "wherever I need them most," including Spera. He also rejected rumors the disproportionate Sabari numbers were due to significant numbers of Arbaki moving to Ghazni, where Governor Pathan was paying Arbaki more than ANAP or Arbaki in Khost. Jamal said this was a rumor generated to sour his relationship with Pathan, who was the Khost governor until August.

District Feedback: Ready for Any Help, But Will They Stay?

16. (SBU) Hazrat Mir, District Commissioner of Jaji Maidan, told PRTOff November 30 the entire 10-man Arbaki force at the district center had applied for 40 district ANAP positions. He said authorities tried to get a good geographic mix of district locals in the new force, but ended up with a disproportionate number of applicants from the area immediately surrounding the District Center due to commuting

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challenges. District ANP Commander Nobad Khan said the ANAP will inherit the advantages and limitations of the locally employed Arbaki but that whatever the ANAP shortcomings, the Arbaki offers at least a base of a security force to build on and the extra numbers ANAP will bring will be a welcome improvement. He sardonically added the ANAP would also face the same retention problems his underpaid and under-equipped regular ANP force faces.

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